

M O N O D Y

ON THE

D E A T H

O F

Mr. JOHN HENDERSON,

Late of COVENT-GARDEN, THEATRE.

By GEORGE DAVIES HARLEY,

Of the THEATRE-ROYAL, NORWICH.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following stanzas are offered to the world, as an humble attempt to give a faint sketch of the many excellencies of a departed Genius, with whom the Author lived for some years in the habits of the most cordial and desirable friendship.—Mr. HENDERSON's professional abilities were long the subject of general admiration while living; which, with his private virtues, must ever claim, and receive the most unbounded praise and esteem from all who have been witness of the former, experienced the latter, or heard of both.—It is therefore hoped that this debt of gratitude (though nothing was wanting to perpetuate his memory) however imperfectly expressed by the maiden pen of a young novice in the same profession, will not disgrace the man, who only at his death ceased to be his patron, nor prove unacceptable to those, at least, with whom (yet) his name is dear; and whose voluntary friendship to the Author, called aloud for some public recital of his

A worth

worth, which perhaps the most laboured production of the ablest hand would imperfectly convey; for though he is aware that the uninterested reader may very possibly refuse to give him credit for every encomium, yet he is confident that all who were the least acquainted with the man, will lament his inability to speak his deserts: And had the subject (to the Author's knowledge) been touched by any other pen, this attempt would never have appeared before the public eye; but his feelings had been confined to a private corroboration of that deserved praise, bestowed by some abler Bard.—However, such as it is, he consigns it to the world “with all its imperfections on its head,” and only asks for that countenance which the subject may claim, and the execution deserve; for though the original motive was, in some measure, to give vent to those mingled and most poignant emotions of grief, gratitude and admiration that pressed about the heart and struggled to break forth, yet now, its public success as a literary work, will either entirely subdue in him a growing passion for poetic composition, or stimulate him, not only to cultivate his propensity that way, but also to publish in a short time, some Miscellaneous Pieces, composed in a few
leisure

leisure hours, snatched from the almost perpetual hurry of the Theatre.

The unbiaſſed and enlightened world at large, can alone give a decided opinion on matters of this kind. —One perſon, bleſt with ample powers to diſcriminate on the merits of the following piece, and whoſe diſpoſition was not ſoured by any adventitious circumſtances, returned it to the Author with the warmeſt expreſſions of praiſe, —Another, perhaps, equally capable of judging, but whoſe breaſt I will not ſay was ſo entirely free of acidity, was not by any means ſo favourable in his deciſion.

Thus, neither buoyed up by the applauſe of the one, nor depressed by the ſeverity of the other, he leaves to the candid public, the ultimate decree, whoſe authority he will not dare to arraign.

G. D. H.

NORWICH, Sept. 1787.

M O N O D Y.

HA! whence those sounds that speak difaster nigh,
And rob my harrafs'd spirits of their rest?
Why starts the tear unbidden from mine eye,
Or whence these throbs that rend my lab'ring breast?

Is there some general woe about to fall,
And wrap in common sadness all the land?
Or does my single lot inherit all,
The bursting woes of Fate's inveterate hand?

B

No

No partial chance cou'd shake my dauntless heart,
 No trivial loss my bosom's peace destroy,
 Not DELIA's knell cou'd e'er such dread impart,
 To blast at once the healthful face of joy.

Ah! not to *me* alone, th' affrighted gale,
 Its wild unwelcome tidings strives to speak,
 All Nature sickens at th' imperfect tale,
 And Death's pale hues o'ergrow each ruddy cheek.

Now o'er my mind the thick'ning horrors throng,
 Ten thousand sighs convulse the troubled air,
 Loud plaints arise from many a falt'ring tongue,
 And screams of grief and mutterings of despair!

Hark! how the Screech-Owl flaps his leaden wings,
 And labours through the thick impervious gloom
 Of death and horror, dissonantly sings,
 And hastes to rook him on some honour'd tomb.

Ill-omen'd

Ill-omen'd bird, that fliest the face of day,
 To sculk in charnel-house or cypress grove,
 O guide me now where'er thour't doom'd to stray,
 Where'er thy dreadful errand bids thee rove.

Onward I go, with trembling limbs and flow,
 While many a mingled murmur wounds mine ear;
 The timid tread, the smother'd sigh, and now
 The respirations short, of doubt and fear!

Nought but increasing dread cou'd urge me on,
 Thro' crouding forms fresh issuing as I pass,
 For still my guide proclaims some *dear friend gone!*
 Thrice flutt'ring 'gainst the casements quiv'ring glass.

Now, O my soul! collect thy scatter'd powers,
 And all thy wonted strength at once resume,
 Heed not the bell that moans in yonder towers,
 Nor tapers dim, that aggravate the gloom;

Nor

Nor all the fears that multiply around,
As if enamour'd of this shudd'ring clay,
But let me quick attend that awful sound,
And follow to its gaol yon pensive ray.

Still as my anxious soul impells me on,
The utmost malice of my fate to share,
Some pitying spirit whispers oft 'begone!
' Nor tempt the terrors which thou canst not bear.'

Away! ne'er shall my fond enquiries cease,
Nor threat'ning Dæmons thwart me as I go,
E'en Death's last pangs were extacy and peace,
Compar'd with what my bosom burns to know.

I'll thank my foe, and call him wond'rous kind,
That shall my fate malignantly express,
E'en tho' therein my instant death I find,
E'en while he triumphs, wou'd I kneel and bless.

Yet

Yet why forestall dark Destiny's decree,
 Or shrink appall'd from the uncertain blow?
 Friendship's firm shield, shall my strong buckler be,
 And joys domestic brave the keenest woe.

I have a friend, the patron of my youth,
 Nature's chief boast, and ev'ry Muses pride,
 The soul of Genius, and the sun of Truth,
 Their heav'nly-mingled beams diffusing wide.

From Fate's worst shaft his friendship would protect,
 Or more than balance ev'ry treach'rous dart,
 Affliction's scourges and the world's neglect,
 His love would heal and deaden ev'ry smart:

Fly then weak Fear, for well may'st thou perceive,
 That lull'd in blest security I lie:
 While Heav'n permits that HENDERSON shou'd live,
 I cannot suffer, nor my comforts die.

Oh impious boast! for scarcely had I prest
 Sweet Peace once more, and own'd her gentle sway,
 Than added horrors struck upon my breast,
 And shook each fibre of this yielding clay.

Methought a voice, tho' now by anguish strain'd,
 Familiar yet, shot mad'ning thro' mine ear,
 Of countless woes, and cruel gods complain'd,
 That stretch'd her lord on his untimely bier.

It ceas'd—and yet my doom *suspended* hung—
 Again it wildly rav'd—again 'twas *fled*—
 But soon this climax clos'd her falt'ring tongue,
 ' My life, my all, my HENDERSON is dead!'

As falls the bolt that rends the knotted oak,
 Nor spares the bird that fought its shade thro' fear,
 So fell my heart beneath this ruthless stroke,
 And crush'd the charmer *Hope* that nestled near.

O God!

O God! cried I, when grief did *let* me speak,
 And *is* this so? and *could'st* thou thus ordain?
 Deal this dire blow that many a heart must *break*,
 And thousands whelm in sympathetic pain.

Cou'd not a nation's fervent prayers prevail,
 Nor friendship's num'rous supplications save,
 Nor yet his lovely Widow's frantic tale,
 Nor HARRIET's sorrows snatch him from the grave?

Well, well might Nature strive to hush the tale,
 That spoke her fav'rite wrested from her arms,
 And o'er the world draw close her darkest veil,
 And speak ten thousand ways her wild alarms.

Scarce had great Truth fix'd firm her sov'reign name,
 And simple *Nature* rose o'er gaudy *Art*,
 'Gainst foes combin'd maintain'd his hard-earn'd fame,
 Whilst baffled Envy hurl'd her hurtless dart.

Scarce

Scarce had we witness'd with admiring eyes,
 His brilliant talents and his virtues bright,
 Than cruel Heaven the valu'd boon denies,
 Stops his career and tears him from our sight!

Where then the honours which he just had gain'd,
 And all the pleasing comforts which they gave,
 Which num'rous joys "and troops of friends" obtain'd,
 But only given to flourish o'er his grave?

It *cannot* be—nor must I yet believe,
 That Heav'n but lent him for so short a term;
 But soon yon mournful train shall undeceive,
 And heal each wound, or ev'ry fear confirm.

Sudden I flew—and doubt as quickly fled,
 Scar'd at the sound of many a sad note wild!—
 I join'd the throng—but ask'd not who was dead—
 —There rav'd his *widow*—and there wept his *child*!

There was a scene that *Fancy* never knew,
 Nor this poor heart till now acknowledg'd such;
 A scene his *Shakspeare's* magic never drew,
 Nor *Reynold's* warm creative pencil touch'd.

From fiction here disguis'd in truth's array,
 No well-feign'd sorrows once were seen to flow,
 No needy hireling fram'd a fulsome lay,
 Nor venal voice disturb'd the general woe.

There as my eyes suffus'd, wou'd let me trace
 By the faint, sickly, tapers glimm'ring glare,
 I recogniz'd full many a well-known face,
 Deep furrow'd now with absolute despair!

There too *Melpomene*, with tortur'd soul,
 Her speechless grief wild starting from her eye,
 To her pale lips applied the poison'd bowl,
 That fled repell'd before a bursting sigh!

Quick had her hand perform'd th' unfinish'd deed,
And rais'd the poniard high to give the stroke—
Had not Reflection question'd of the need,
To strike the heart that was already broke.

Tho' nurs'd by Grief and of Affliction bred,
And long innur'd to Fate's severest blows,
Too deeply touch'd, *that* heart with anguish bled,
That erst *delighted* in *extremest* woes.

E'en gay *Thalia*, still in transports drest,
Whose bright'ning face cou'd coldest natures cheer,
Now first was seen to strike her alter'd breast,
And from her eyelids wipe the gushing tear.

Fled was the smile, and fled the wanton air,
The Comic humour sporting in her eye,
No flowers her robe, nor wreaths adorn'd her hair,
Her mirror broken and her mask flung by.

Not

Not such their loss when *Garrick* fought the skies,
For then this Phænix from his ashes sprung;
But who shall now from HENDERSON'S arise
To charm like him, the pleas'd attentive throng?

Here his own *Yorick's* ever gentle shade,
Wrapt in Humanity's soft milk-white vest,
From blest Elysium's bowers unheeded stray'd
To clasp his brother to his beating breast.

For soon as Sympathy in heav'n was seen,
Charg'd with th' uttering of the dreadful tale,
With fervent friendship and with anguish keen
To earth he flew, o'er horror to prevail.

Escap'd from bliss—as mortal now once more,
A pious oath e'en 'scap'd him at the grave,
Such as of old determin'd Toby swore,
But ah, how vain!—when *Elliot cou'd not save.

* Sir John Elliot, an eminent Physician, and a particular friend of Mr. Henderson's.

One precious drop from that still copious spring,
“ Dear Sensibility!”—conspicuous stole,
I saw distress his tender bosom wring,
And felt th’ invenom’d shaft that cut his soul.

Here laurell’d Science snatch’d the verdant wreath,
That from the first of time his brows embrac’d,
‘ This one immortal leaf I thee bequeath,
And be thy tomb with endless honours grac’d.’

Here Genius, Taste, here Humour, Wit and Whim,
And all the Virtues, all the Graces came,
All, all deplor’d the cureless loss of him,
Whose spirit caught, and still preserv’d their flame.

In saddest plight the *Drama’s* mourners mov’d—
In order’d grief, with *Shakspeare* at their head,
Close press’d by those his judgment once approv’d,
In different hosts by mighty leaders led.

But

But fullen grief, arrests Description's power,
 Nor can the Muse their sep'rate claims make known,
 For doom'd a sufferer in this woe-fraught hour,
 Too much endures, e'en to relate her own.

Let practis'd Bards, all emulous of Fame,
 Th' extended theme in polish'd lays rehearse,
 Warmly pourtray with Inspiration's flame,
 A subject worthy of the boldest verse.

For me, whose natal hour unheeded fell,
 Upon a time no fav'ring influence shone,
 Must private woes in humblest manner tell,
 And frame my verse by Friendship's power alone.

Yet link'd by *Sympathy's* endearing ties,
 To social sufferings, as to social joys,
 Beholds around, Despondency arise,
 And clashing cares th' oercharg'd mind employs.

Here *Hamlet*, philosophic Prince, was seen
Irregularly stalk in alter'd guise,
Hurt was *indeed* the brain, and wild the mien,
And rack'd the breast that heav'd its bursting sighs.

"And is it come to this"—he sadly said,
As to his corse in agony he clung,
"He was a man"—He *was*! he *now* is *dead*!
"And break my heart, for I may hold my tongue."

Here hum'rous *Jack*—no *counterfeiting* now,
'Gainst Melancholy's power in vain wou'd strive,
Time ne'er can ease him of this dreadful blow,
Nor *leavers* raise, nor *cups of sack* revive.

Dim are the eyes that roll'd with wanton glee,
And spoke a mind with broadest humour fraught,
Those eyes no more shall animated be,
Nor move obedient to the jovial thought.

There

There fullen *Richard*, full of deep design,
Whose savage breast no soft emotions knew,
Felt at his heart a pitying power divine,
That fill'd his fiery eyes with glistening dew.

Where now shall mad'ning *Lear* for succour fly,
How in his dotage wond'rous deeds perform?
How will he dare to meet the angry sky,
“Or bide the pelting of th' pit'less storm”?

Here gay *Don John* and proud *Malvolio*,
That until now no weeds of sorrow wore,
With fretful speech and melancholy brow
Own'd mirth was dead and pedantry no more.

Among the train that most bewail'd his fate,
Nor hop'd relief, was desperate *Sir Giles*,
No honors now cou'd wicked joys create,
Nor mines of wealth, nor any great man's smiles.

Comus

Comus is fled and all his route broke up,
That erst thro' Ludlow's mystic mazes trod;
More charm'd his eyes than did the flaming cup,
The magic dust, or yet th' enchanting rod.

Here sprightly *Benedick* and bustling *Bayes*,
Have lost the charms that made their presence dear,
Nor this the smile, nor that the laugh can raise.
Nor shoot *one* shaft of wit and folly here.

The wretched *Thane*, tho' freed from infamy,
With no "false face" cou'd hide a desperate sorrow,
But as he sorely wail'd the dire decree,
Heart-broke exclaim'd—"He shou'd have dy'd to-
morrow.

Now bashful *Leon*, who since *Garrick's* death,
Once rais'd his head and led the lordly life,
Finds all his powers escap'd with *Roscius's* breath,
Nor hopes to *rule*, tho' he might get a wife.

There

There fell *Iago*, 'mongst the suff'ring train,
With mute expression told his deep dismay,
He saw expir'd Insinuations reign,
Nor walks again in Treach'ry's guileful way.

Here *Jacques*' "big round tears," in piteous chase,
"Cours'd one another down each manly cheek,"
Deep channels fretting in his pensive face,
And lab'ring heart that struggled hard to break.

And *Shylock* too had mingled with the croud,
Had not the vet'ran *Macklin* lur'd his heart,
Long since allur'd, and of the alliance proud,
Sworn while he liv'd, ne'er from his lord to part.

Here Old *Evander* and *Sciolto* move,
With halting step and tott'ring in the rear;
"Tho' last, not least, in HENDERSON's dear love,"
Now well confirm'd by many a briny tear.

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"Tho' last, not least, in HENDERSON's dear love,"
Now well confirm'd by many a briny tear.

The last sad office which they e'er will pay,
Is to attend their ages fallen prop,
For spurr'd by grief and nature's swift decay,
They to their last Asylum soon must drop.

Nor must the *Grampian Shepherd's* humble lot,
Be now debarr'd a place his sorrows claim,
Ne'er shall his aged suff'rings be forgot,
But live recorded with his Master's fame.

And many a well-known aged face I see,
And many a fault'ring voice I hear beside,
Yet none more just might rue the harsh decree,
Than he who bold exclaim'd—"He might have died!"

The firm *Horatius*—who had rather know,
His boy had fall'n beneath the ruthless stroke,
Than that he fled ignobly from the foe,
Or bow'd his neck unto the Alban yoke.

The

The firm *Horatius*—Ah! the very fame,
Whom last our *Roscius Proteus*, honours bore,
And own'd he felt that patriotic flame,
That once *he* felt, but now should feel no more.

(To serve the Drama and assert his right,
Perhaps too soon he left the sickly bed,
And the rash act that fix'd his glory quite,
To Death's dark realms the vanquish'd victor sped).

All these and many more distinctly seen,
In varying accents told one common grief:
Hope never once illum'd the black'ning scene,
Nor promis'd lasting joys, or short relief.

But why shou'd these alone the right engross,
The mournful right and priv'lege to complain,
Not more their grief, nor greater is their loss,
Than mine, the meanest of his honor'd train.

I have

I have a Patron, nay a Father lost,
A more than Father—ev'ry honor'd name,
Whose settled friendship, ne'er by changes tost,
My lasting love and endless grief must claim.

My many faults with partial eye he view'd,
And strove to weed them out with tend'rest care,
Left the young heart, by some sharp touch too rude,
Rebell'd and spurn'd the good he cherish'd there.

On his clear brow, severity ne'er hung,
Nor gnawing passion rankled in his heart,
But soft persuasion hung upon his tongue,
And spoke a spotless soul devoid of art.

But who shall now the erring thought direct,
And train to noble deeds my unform'd mind;
Ah!—No such friendship can I e'er expect,
So wond'rous firm and generously kind!

So

So great a blessing *twice* was never meant,
For man to share, or to his wishes given,
And only *once* to *favor'd* mortals lent,
For some kind purpose of indulgent heaven.

But see! the Abbey's pond'rous doors give way,
Hark! thro' the aisles the grating hinges sound,
How ev'ry voice the echoing tombs betray,
And spread our woes, reverberating round.

The sombrous dome, responsive to our woes,
The solemn dirges, that our loss deplore,
All, all assist to aggravate our throes,
Inspiring horrors never felt before.

And here the bird of night that 'fore me flew,
And moping sought some unfrequented hold,
Or rustling brush'd the foul funereal yew,
In shriller shrieks his anguish 'gan unfold.

G

Now

Now thro' the aisles, deep echoing to their moans,
The sad procession bore the honor'd bier,
Where *Shakspeare's* Genius listening to their groans,
Bow'd from his shrine, and cry'd—' Repose him here.'

Here then they halted at his *Shakspeare's* shrine,
Here was the anthem sung—the service read,
When " dust to dust"—from holy writ divine,
Swell'd the long scroll of th' illustrious dead.

But now each honor to his mem'ry due,
The rites funereal all distinctly paid,
Let me awhile, absorb'd in sorrow, view,
The precious spot where all our joys are laid.

Let faithful friendship draw the changed face
Of all we lov'd and all we now deplore,
One private scene of sharpest misery trace,
And fix the look that ne'er shall alter more.

What

What tho' in hallow'd earth his ashes lie,
And with immortal far-fam'd names repose,
That thought not stops one fountain of the eye,
Nor heals one little wound this bosom knows.

Not all the prayers which pious hearts could form,
The world's whole wealth collected at a breath,
To life's kind glow his frozen breast cou'd warm,
Or bribe to mercy, unrelenting Death.

Cold are those lips whose fascinating smile,
Smooth'd his keen wit and grac'd the polish'd jest,
Whose poignant edge cou'd every ill beguile,
And drive th' intruding anguish from the breast.

Clos'd are those eyes that late with passion arm'd,
Or moving slowly to his temper'd mind,
Th' obdurate breast with fictitious fears alarm'd,
Or sway'd the soul that clamour cou'd not bind.

No

No more his ears shall catch the grateful sound
Of general plaudits to his genius due,
Nor joyous converse sweetly mingling round,
From friends, relations, and th' enlighten'd few.

No more his heart shall feel th' extatic joy,
Which oft the "milk of human kindness" gave;
No more on gen'rous acts his thoughts employ,
Nor reach his hand to succour and to save.

No more alas! his widow'd wife shall hear,
His footsteps sound and run her Lord to meet;
Steal from his tongue rich music for her ear,
And from his lips joy-kindling kisses sweet.

No more supremely blest! securely dwell,
On many a coming scene of sweet delight,
No smiling morn shall wake her bliss to tell,
Nor kind endearment glad th' approaching night.

But

But wrapt in endless sorrow's darkest veil,
 Which Time in vain shall strive to snatch away,
 While sad reflection brings the dreadful tale,
 And keeps it drawn on ev'ry future day.

Of all bereft, save that his fame survives,
 And still must claim a gen'rous nation's care,
 With whom each tender shoot of genius thrives,
 And lives to bless the power that plac'd it there.

His little HARRIET too, shall live to tell,
 How look'd her Sire, and how her father walk'd,
 His ev'ry action yet rememb'ring well,
 And lisping, sweetly mimic how he talk'd.

Shall tell how on his knee she oft has sat,
 How oft she us'd his dear embrace to prove,
 How oft he blended with her harmless chat
 The mild instructions of a parent's love.

Struck with the tale the half-pleas'd mother fees,
In this lov'd offspring all the father rife,
While tears like dew-drops on the lillies leaves,
Hang sweetly beauteous near their glistening eyes.

' And is he gone? and will he *ne'er* return?'
The wretched fair again of *Heaven* demands.
Of *her*, the child, her destiny wou'd learn,
' Nor I once clasp his knees, nor kiss his hands?'

' No!'—faintly fell—with that reluctant tone,
That yet at full confirm'd the dread decree,
' For ever gone he is—and we must moan,
' Nor I embrace, nor thou once clasp his knee.

' But thou, sweet girl, sole object of my care,
' In *my* dear love, shalt find *his* goodness run,
' And all the blessings of that affluence share,
' His prudence kept when industry had won.

' We'll

‘ We’ll quit the scenes where late our pleasures lay,
‘ And seek Retirement’s unmolested bower.—
‘ Yet must we?—Yes my child, we must away,
‘ And spend in solitude the pensive hour.

‘ There will I rear thee, (to my fate resign’d),
‘ To ev’ry virtue and to every grace,
‘ That late adorn’d thy father’s spotless mind,
‘ Liv’d in his heart, and shone upon his face.

‘ The ling’ring *thought* indeed will stay behind,
‘ And dwell on past delights and present pains,
‘ Which we will tell to ev’ry passing wind,
‘ That fans the groves, or breathes along the plains,’

So saying—fondly clasp’d her weeping child,
Once more her Lord was to her bosom prest—
They tore her hence—her looks were frantic wild,
—The scene was clos’d—Let fancy guess the rest.

Oh!

Oh! how unwilling is the heart to own,
Each prospect darken'd—every comfort fled,
How oft we cherish *Hope*, whose pow'r is known
To cheer the foul and raise the drooping head.

Yet Hope but flatters, till on life's rough sea
Her treach'rous waves have far our vessels borne,
When left to weather foul Misfortune's sea,
Our vent'rous barks by adverse ills are torn.

Yet still we pass and cling to safety's shore,
And fondly hope our destiny to shun,
Seize the last trembling reed to bear us o'er,
Nor till that fails us, own ourselves undone!

So the poor Mariner, by tempests tost,
And rudely dash'd upon his wat'ry bier,
Deems not his shatter'd frame for ever lost,
While one poor plank floats flatteringly near.

But

But soon the curling billows fiercely roll,
And crush their victim in their rash embrace,
Hope never more buoys up his sinking soul,
Nor kindles comfort in his trusting face.

All, all is past! and welcome dark despair,
Nor Hope once dare to flit across the gloom;
I wish not now thy ill-tim'd smiles to share,
But breathe my selfish sorrows o'er his tomb:

But now the morn her blushing light reveals,
Unfriendly still to Melancholy's reign,
Till day retires, my breast its woes conceals,
Repressing now, more wildly to complain.

Here at the dead and silent hour of night,
While sleep shall close the eye, from anguish free,
By the pale moon's imperfect glimm'ring light,
This restless form shall oft revisit thee.

The long drawn aisles and mould'ring forms around,
Receiving yet their unexhausted praise,
Full oft shall see me tread this hallow'd ground,
And hearken to my wild unalter'd lays.

In Grief's wild transport clasp thy sacred urn,
And to this heart the cold dank marble press;
This heart that ever shall with friendship burn,
And scorn relief from Sorrow's vast excess.

Still shall thy ashes drink the grateful dew,
That all unbidden from these springs shall fall,
Rememb'rance never shall the boon refuse,
Nor hide her suff'rings at Affection's call.

Blest! if as oft my tongue shall tell thy fame,
As oft my tears thy matchless worth impart,
I catch some portion of that heavenly flame,
That fir'd thy mind, and warm'd thy gen'rous heart.

So

(31)

So while my wonder shall its tributes give,
And Gratitude its endless strains supply,
Shall his idea teach me how to LIVE,
And his example learn me how to DIE!

F I N I S.

